

## SUMMARY

The archaeological investigation of Wilmington Boulevard provided an opportunity to study Wilmington's past; a past buried beneath the city's modern landscape. Through this study we learned about her people, neighborhoods, and businesses and how they changed over time. This "buried past" was very complex, containing many different layers of refuse, artifacts and structures, often in very large quantities. To understand and interpret these remains required a large team of experts in planning, history, archaeology, photography, cartography, faunal and floral analysis. These experts carefully excavated, measured, recorded, photographed, mapped, and analyzed thousands of pieces of pottery, glass, metal, bone, seeds, and shell. Each item was not studied as a single object, but in terms of its relationship to other materials removed from the ground and to the soil deposits or features from which the artifact originated. It is this relationship that provides the linkage between the artifact and the people who placed it on or within the ground. If this relationship is not carefully recorded and the artifact is removed from its resting place, this valuable link to the past is gone. It is like tearing out a line from a play and then trying to understand the meaning of the play from this single line.

Our study of the "lines" buried in downtown Wilmington have taught us much about the historic "play" that was enacted between the Brandywine and Christina Rivers. We learned about the nature of Wilmington's eighteenth and nineteenth century neighborhoods, how these neighborhoods changed over time, what types of businesses existed in the central area of the city, what historic Wilmingtonians ate, and how, like today, families in the past fell upon hard economic times.

The archaeology of our cities is a very fragile, but important link to our past. Activities of agencies like the Federal Highway Administration and the Delaware Department of Transportation help preserve aspects of this past through

investigations like the Wilmington Boulevard project. Not only has there been an attempt to revitalize Wilmington's inner city by building the new highway, but there was an opportunity to "revitalize" our understanding of our American heritage present beneath Wilmington's streets.

Appreciation is extended to the involved individuals for their support, administration, research and services.

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